



State of California
Respiratory Care Board
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March 15, 2004

Inquiry: Is it within the scope of practice of a licensed Respiratory Therapist to recover a patient, post bronchoscopy procedure, without the presence of an RN? There has been some concern at our facility in San Diego California that policy and title 22 states an RN must be present. With the new nurse to patient ratio, alleviating a RN from this procedure would not only help with staffing issues, but may help increase the roll of the RCP and allow them to perform in a higher capacity towards their scope of practice.

If this is allowed, can you tell me of any Hospital in California that may be doing this procedure with an RCP?

Also, can a registered respiratory therapist administer the pre-medication for bronchoscopy under the supervision of an MD. (i.e.: Morphine, Versed, Demerol).

Response: The term "recover a patient" means many things in the acute care as well as the ambulatory clinic world of California. Usually, it is inferred that the patient has received general anesthesia, which does have criteria established in California Code of Regulations, Title 22 regarding nurses and their role in recovering these patients. In the case of most bronchoscopy procedures, they are usually done utilizing conscious sedation techniques with medications such as Versed, Demerol or Morphine. When the procedure is performed under these circumstances, then the post procedure term is usually referred to as observation and not recovery. If this is the case in your facility, then it would be acceptable for a licensed practitioner to provide this service. This is no different than the observation that licensed practitioners provide post treadmill, exercise PFT, Methylcholine challenge test or cardiopulmonary stress test. The therapist's role is to ensure that the patient successfully recovers and is able to be sent home safely after the procedure. Monitoring of sensorium, blood pressure, pulse, respirations, abnormal sputum as well as any other appropriate parameters is a very common and acceptable practice.

Additionally, it is also acceptable for the practitioner to administer any appropriate medications associated with the diagnostic procedure

including their pre-procedure medication, as directed by a physician or as part of an established protocol.

I am not able to provide you with a list of references that currently practice this because the Board does not have that information. I would recommend you get a listing of hospitals in California and begin the task of researching this for your self.

Reference # 2004-C-05